

Wednesday, February 5, 2014

Montana Office of Public Instruction
Variance to Standards Review Board
Denise Juneau, State Superintendent
Box 202501
Helena, MT 59620-2501

Honorable Superintendent Juneau,

On behalf of Billings Independent School District #52, I hereby submit this request for relief from Accreditation Standards 10.55.704 (Assignment of District Superintendents) and 10.55.705 (Assignment of School Administrators/Principals). Currently, these standards require the district to employ a 1 FTE Principal and a .5 FTE Superintendent. The District believes that one person, a Superintendent/Principal, can easily handle both positions. Therefore, ISD #52 requests that a variance to the standards be approved.

To support that request, the District has attached a completed Variances to Standards Application and a demographic handout to assist the Superintendent in understanding the district.

The principle purpose of the request is to allow the district to distribute its financial resources in the most effective and efficient manner to the benefit of its students. The projected cost of additional administrative staff is estimated at over \$40,000. The District believes this money is better spend in direct support of students than on redundant administration.

Independent School is housed in one building. Students and staff are readily accessible. Parents have direct access to school administration. Policies and job descriptors have along been in place for the position of Superintendent/Principal. The addition of another administrator simply confuses people and creates an unnecessary level of bureaucracy.

The District requests that in deliberation of this application, the Superintendent take into account the FTE and enrollment of the district. The current system FTE counting the Principal and Superintendent is 20.025. This is a mere 3 FTE over the standard for a part time superintendent (17 FTE). Approval of the variance would reduce the system FTE to 19.525 FTE. In addition, the current enrollment of 294 is 54% of the upper standard of 549 for full time principal. The district suggests that one person devoting .25 FTE to Superintendent and .75 FTE to Principal is sufficient for administration given the arbitrariness of the numbers. Note: In preparation of this request, the district could find no research to support either the standard for the assignment of superintendents or the assignment of principals.

In conclusion, I would like to point to the unique nature of our school district. We are the only district of our size (294 students) and configuration (K-6) in the state. This unique position calls for a unique approach to these administrative standards. The one district, one school, one administrator model is best for our situation. It allows for the efficient use of financial resources, while ensuring that all administrative obligations are met. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I respectfully request your support.

Respectfully submitted,



Bill Laurent, Superintendent

Independent School District #52 Demographics

Independent School District #52 is located in northeast Billings, Montana, approximately one half mile north of the Billings city limits on HW 87. It serves a suburban/rural population of approximately 2500 residents with a school population of 294 as of January, 2014. Medium household income is \$77,500 and the medium house value is \$196,000. The percentage of students on free and reduced lunch is currently 21%.

The district operates only one school within its boundaries. Independent School District #52 is considered a K-8 Independent Elementary School District by Montana Code. Independent Elementary is a K-6 elementary school with an enrollment of 294 students. Students in grades 7-8 attend middle school in Billings School District #2. Independent School District #52 pays tuition for those students.

Independent Elementary employs 14 full-time classroom teachers, a full-time librarian, and part-time music, physical education, Title I and counseling positions. (18.52 FTE) As of 2013-2014, the district also employs a full-time principal and a half-time superintendent.

Independent School District #52 operates with a General Fund Budget (Fiscal Year 2014) of \$1.453 million. In addition, the district has the following budgeted funds: Transportation (\$52,500), Tuition (\$82,500), Retirement (\$184,000), Technology (\$19,818), and Debt Service (\$270,962). The district has unsuccessfully run levies the past five years.

During Fiscal Year 2014, Independent School District #52 expended \$4925 per student. This is one of the lowest per pupil expenditures in the state of Montana. It is this low level of funding that prompts the district to submit this request.



VARIANCES TO STANDARDS APPLICATION

March 3, 2014

Purpose: ARM 10.55.604.1. A local board of trustees may apply to the Board of Public Education through the Superintendent of Public Instruction to implement a variance to a standard or a section of standards, excluding standards stating statutory criteria, standards pertaining to educator licensure or endorsement, and content standards as defined by the Board of Public Education and provided in guidance from the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

DUE DATES

- First semester implementation; March 3, 2014
 - Second semester implementation; July 7, 2014
-

COUNTY: Yellowstone

DISTRICT: Independent School District #52

LIST THE SCHOOL OR MULTIPLE SCHOOLS THAT ARE REQUESTING THE VARIANCE(S):

1. Is this an initial application (2 years) or a Renewal application (3 years)?

Initial two year application.

2. Is this for first semester implementation or second semester implementation?

First semester, 2014-2015

3. Standard(s) for which a variance is requested, i.e., 10.55.709. If there is a program delivery standard, be sure to list it as well. For example, 10.55.1801.

10.55.704 and 10.55.705

4. Please attach evidence through official minutes of the board of trustees that local school community stakeholders were involved in the consideration and development of the proposed variance to standards. Stakeholder groups include trustees, administrators, teachers, classified school staff, parents, community members, and students as applicable.

See attached Board minutes and newsletter article. No public comment was submitted.

5. Please provide evidence that the board of trustees adopted its application for variance at an official, properly noticed meeting of its board of trustees.

Adopted Monday, January 6, 2014.





6. Describe the variance requested.

It is requested that Independent School District #52, an independent elementary school district, located in Billings, Montana, serving 294 students in grades K-6, be allowed to have one person serve as both District Superintendent and School Principal.

7. Provide a brief statement of the mission and goals of this proposed variance.

This variance is requested in order to allow the district to provide a cost effective, bureaucratically efficient, and educationally sound administrative model. The goals of the variance are as follows (1) provide cost effective administration, (2) reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, and (3) provide an educationally sound administrative model.

8. List at least one specific measurable objective(s) that demonstrates that the proposed variance will meet or exceed the results under the current standard(s).

The most critical objective of this variance request is to reduce the cost of school administration. The current Standard requires 1.5 FTE administrators is estimated to cost, at a minimum \$160,400 assuming the district could find someone who would actually want to work the .5 FTE. Otherwise this district would have to create a full time position which would cost an additional \$40,000 plus.

In addition, there are numerous performance objectives that can be cited which can be carried out by one administrator. A few of those are listed below.

1. The Superintendent/Principal shall attend 100% of School Board meetings serving the role of adviser as prescribed in School Board policy.
2. The Superintendent/Principal shall conduct at least one formal observation of each of the 18.5 FTE certified staff on an annual basis.
3. The Superintendent/Principal shall complete all reports required by the Office of Public Instruction.
4. The S/P shall monitor student behavior.
5. The S/P shall publish a periodic newsletter.
6. The S/P shall carry out all duties assigned by the Board of Trustees and the State of Montana.

Note: A copy of the job description is attached





9. What data or evidence will be gathered to document progress toward meeting the measurable objectives?

The data collected to document the primary objective is readily available through a review of the district expenditures. If the proposed variance is approved, district expenditures for school administration shall be reduced by a minimum of \$40,000. This can be verified by comparing proposed budgets.

The additional performance items mentioned can be documented as follows:

1. The District Clerk shall document attendance at all Board meetings.
2. The Superintendent/Principal will report to the Board of Trustees the number and dates of the formal observations.
3. OPI monitors report submissions.
4. A student behavior log shall be kept.
5. Copies of the newsletter shall be retained for review.
6. The Board of Trustees shall evaluate the performance of the S/P on an annual basis.

10. In what way does this variance to the standard meet the specific needs of the students in your school(s)?

This variance allows the Board of Trustees to meet the specific needs of students by allowing the allocation of resources to areas that directly impact students including instructional aides, up-to-date textbooks, additional certified staff to reduce class size, etc. All of these become options when resources (dollars) become available as a result of the reduction in administrative FTE.

11. Variance to Standard: Outline how and why the proposed variance would be:

a. Workable. (Sufficient district resources are available for the success of the variance.)

This variance allows the Board of Trustees to meet the specific needs of students by allowing the allocation of resources to areas that directly impact students including instructional aides, up-to-date textbooks, additional certified staff to reduce class size, etc. All of these become options when resources (dollars) become available as a result of the reduction in administrative FTE. This variance is very workable. The district has operated for the past 25 years with one person serving as Superintendent/Principal. Independent School is funded at the K-6 level. Current per pupil expenditures in the General Fund are \$4925. This amount is one of the lowest in the state. (OPI Finance) Personnel costs exceed 86% of the GFB. This, coupled with the failure of the district to pass operating levies each of the last five years, has created an annual budget crisis. The variance, which saves the district approximately \$40,000, makes the general fund budget workable and allows for sufficient resources to assure the success of the variance.





b. Educationally sound. (Applicant has relied on sound research as a rationale for the variance.)

Educational research is generally positive when it comes to small schools. The concept of one district, one school, one administrator is an example that reflects the small school model. Specifically, the District has been unable to find any research on the assignment of administrators, superintendents or principals, to K-6 independent elementary districts. The District requests as much data as OPI can provide as to the development of the numbers which guided the creation of the current standard.

c. Where applicable, aligned with program standards under ARM 10.55.1101 through 10.55.1901.

Not applicable.

12. Designed to meet the content standards for this area of the curriculum (only applies to those standards which also have related curriculum content standards).

Not applicable.

RENEWAL APPLICATION ONLY: Please attach a summary of the data gathered to demonstrate that the variance cycle ending June 30, met or exceeded the standard. State the measurable objective for the initial or previous application.





Montana
Office of Public Instruction
Denise Juneau, State Superintendent

opi.mt.gov

Mail your signed form to:

Accreditation and Educator Preparation Division
Office of Public Instruction
PO Box 202501
Helena, MT 59620-2501

Board Chair Name: David Nedrow
Board Chair Signature: David Nedrow Date: 2-25-2014
Superintendent Name: Bill Laurent
Superintendent Signature: Bill Laurent Date: 2-25-2014

OPI USE ONLY

Superintendent of Public Instruction: Denise Juneau Date: _____

____ Approve ____ Disapprove

Board of Public Education Chair Sharon Carroll Date: 5/9/14

✓ ____ Approve ____ Disapprove



opi.mt.gov Denise Juneau, Superintendent • Montana Office of Public Instruction

Roundup Rd

87

Roundup Rd

87

Roundup Rd



Leave Request

Jodie Frickle requests approval to use personal leave January 21, 2014 (per Article 7, Section C, number 3 of the ISEA Master Agreement). ***A motion was made to approve the leave request.***

Motion – Mary Nesson / Second – Mike Carle Unanimous vote

PRINCIPAL REPORT

Sheila reported technology training using laptops and I-pads was provided to the teachers one evening in November. Three holiday programs took place over two evenings in the school gymnasium in December. AIMSweb testing will be conducted in January.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

The current enrollment for 2013-2014 is 292 students.

NEW BUSINESS

ISEA Negotiations

Dave read a letter from ISEA President Jessica Van Hemelryck stating they wish to open contract negotiations. ***A motion was made to form a negotiation committee made up of Bill Laurent, Dave Nedrow, Reed Sutton, and Sheila Chouinard.***

Motion – Mary Nesson / Second – Cindy Sparr Unanimous vote

Administrative Variance

Bill requests approval to apply for an administrative variance for one person to serve as both the Principal and Superintendent of the district for two years beginning in the fall of 2014. He would prepare a draft of the application for the trustees to approve at the next board meeting. ***A motion was made to approve applying for an administrative variance.***

Motion – Reed Sutton / Second – Mike Carle Unanimous vote

Preliminary Budget FY 2014-2015

Bill reviewed the budget outlook for FY 2014-2015. The preliminary budget presented is based upon the current year budget and does not reflect the unknown health insurance costs or ISEA negotiations.

School District 2 Middle School Changes

Dave attended a public information meeting conducted by School District 2 regarding future changes related to the construction of new middle schools in the Heights and the west end. By the fall of 2016, 6th grade students in School District 2 will be moved into the middle schools rather than elementary schools. Dave wanted to open a discussion of what, if anything, may need to be changed within our district. Sixth grade students from Independent would most likely be split between Castle Rock and the new middle school to be constructed in the Heights.

The next regular School Board meeting is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on Monday, February 10, 2014. Payroll checks 79898-80009 and warrants 26043-26118 were approved for payment as presented.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Debi Orelup, District Clerk

Dave Nedrow, Chairman

SKYHAWK TALK

It is with Skyhawk Pride, Respect, and Cooperation that We Achieve.

CALENDAR

Fri, Jan 17 • End of Quarter

Mon, Jan 20 • No School

Wed, Jan 22 • Report Cards Sent Home

Thurs, Jan 23 • Hearing Screening Gr. K & 1

Wed, Jan 29 • Girls' Volleyball Begins

Mon, Feb 10 • Board Meeting 7PM

Board Requests Accreditation Variance

The Board of Trustees gave Superintendent Laurent permission to submit to the Office of Public Instruction a Variance to Standards Application. Approval of this variance would allow the District to operate with one person serving as both Superintendent and Principal. For 23 of the last 25 years, the District has functioned with one person serving as the Superintendent/Principal. Recently, the Board of Public Education changed the standard for the assignment of school administrators requiring the District to employ an additional half time superintendent. Currently Mr. Laurent is serving in that position. Approval of the request would allow Ms. Chouinard to serve as both Superintendent and Principal. This configuration is considered a more efficient use of district resources. Individuals interested in commenting on this process are directed to contact either Mr. Laurent or Ms. Chouinard, or submit, in writing, comment to the Board of Trustees.

Daycare Bus Only Parking

To help ensure safety of our students, we have created a Daycare Bus Only parking area. Please be respectful of the marked spaces. Thank you.

The Board Reports...

The Independent School Board of Trustees met in regular session on Monday, January 6th at 7 PM in the school library.

Items addressed included:

- Approval of building use requests from Mike Carle (basketball), Carrie Barnhart (Boy Scouts), and Doug Nichol/Jenni Vickery (Good News Club).

- Approval of leave request from Ms. Frickle.

- Acknowledged receipt of letter from ISEA regarding their desire to begin collective bargaining.

- Approved a recommendation from Superintendent Laurent to apply for an Accreditation Variance.

Received from Superintendent Laurent a copy of a Preliminary Budget for 2014-2015.

Received a report from Board Chair Dave Nedrow on his recent attendance of a meeting regarding the building of a new middle school by Billings School District #2.

DANGEROUS HIGHWAY PARKING

We realize the parking lot is not inviting, but parking on the highway is dangerous for students and drivers. When cars are stopped along the highway, the drivers leaving the parking lot cannot see when it is safe to exit. This creates an unsafe environment! **Please DO NOT stop or park along the highway.**

LOST AND FOUND!

Lost and found items have been gathered and are on display on table by the front office. Please take a moment to check to see if any items belong in to your children.

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MARCH MADNESS at INDEPENDENT

In recognition of the importance of the Fun and Excitement as one of the 8 Conditions that Make a Difference, students and staff are encouraged to participate in Independent's version of March Madness.

Each Friday in March we will celebrate Fun and Excitement by dressing up for Spirit Days in the following manner.

Friday, March 7 • Crazy Sweater Day
Friday, March 14 • Crazy Socks Day
Friday, March 21 • Crazy Hair Day
Friday, March 28 • Independent Blue Day

Student Led Conferences

Thank you for your participation in February's Student Led conferences. The Student Led conferences are a special event at Independent when we empower students to share their pride in their accomplishments with parents. If you missed this opportunity, please contact your child's teacher.

Harlem Globetrotter's Dizzy Grant

On Friday, Feb. 28 at 9 A.M., Dizzy Grant of the world famous Harlem Globetrotters will be at Independent School to present an exciting community outreach program called "The ABCs of Bullying Prevention". This program was designed in coordination with the National Campaign to Stop Violence to help reduce bullying and violence among youth in our schools and communities.

BOX TOPS are due Friday, February 21. Please bring Box Tops to school. Watch for those BONUS Box Tops too!

Andy Warhol Art

Class partner project with Mr. Linford's class, grade 2 and Mr. Christofferson's class, Grade 5.



Chart of Budget with and without variance.

		Current Standard FY2015	Proposed Standard FY2015
	GENERAL ADMIN		
111	Superintendent Salary	\$40,000	\$0
250	Work Comp	\$228	\$0
260	Health Insurance	\$3,945	\$0
310	Official Services (Elections)	\$1,000	\$1,000
320	Professional Development	\$500	\$500
350	Contracted Services	\$10,000	\$10,000
520	Insurance (Liability)	\$13,250	\$13,250
540	Advertising	\$1,000	\$1,000
590	Misc Purchased Services	\$0	\$0
610	Supplies	\$0	\$0
810	Professional Dues	\$2,600	\$2,600
	FUNCTION TOTAL	\$72,523	\$28,350
	SCHOOL ADMIN	FY2015	FY2015
111	Principal Salary	\$72,500	\$72,500
115	Clerical Salary	\$21,450	\$21,450
120	Substitute Salaries		
170	Vacation Leave Term Pay	\$2,000	\$2,000
250	Work Comp	\$536	\$536
260	Health Insurance (P/S)	\$14,829	\$14,829
320	Professional Development	\$500	\$500
440	Repair/Maintenance		
531	Internet/Telephone	\$3,200	\$3,200
532	Postage	\$800	\$800
582	Travel	\$500	\$500
610	Supplies	\$500	\$500
660	Minor New Equipment		
680	Computer Software		
730	Major New Equip		
810	Professional Dues	\$400	\$400
	FUNCTION TOTAL	\$117,215	\$117,215
	Total Admin Cost	\$189,738	\$145,565
	Savings		\$44,173

Independent School District #52 Board Policies

250.14 Performance Responsibilities

1. Coordinate the total educational program and provides leadership in its development and improvement.
2. Assumes responsibility for the implementation and observance of all Board policies and regulations by the school's staff and students.
3. Evaluates and revises, together with the staff, all curriculum guides and courses of study, on a continuing basis.
4. Recommends to the Board for its adoption all courses of study, curriculum guides, and major changes in texts and time schedules to be used in school.
5. Supervises recruitment, screening and training; recommends hiring and assignment; evaluates school's professional staff.
6. Assumes responsibility for the safety and administration of the school plant. Makes recommendations with the reference to the improvements, alterations, and changes in the buildings and equipment of the district.
7. Delegates authority to responsible personnel to assume responsibility for the school in his or her absence.
8. Plans and supervises fire drills and an emergency preparedness program.
9. Budgets school time to provide for the efficient conduct of school instruction and business.
10. Maintains high standards of student conduct and enforces discipline as necessary, according due process to the rights of students. Has authority to suspend students in accordance with Board policy.
11. Asserts leadership in times of civil disobedience in school in accordance with established Board policy.
12. Supervises and evaluates the school's extracurricular program.
13. Supervises the in-service orientation and training of teachers, with special responsibility for staff administrative procedures and instructions.
14. Prepares all non-financial school reports for the County Superintendent and the OPI for Board approval.
15. Informs and advises the Board about the programs, practices, and problems of the school, and keeps the Board informed of activities operating under the Board's authority.
16. Assumes responsibility for the attendance, conduct and health of students.
17. Prepares the annual operating budget recommendations and implements the Board approved budget.
18. Supervises the maintenance of accurate records on the progress and attendance of students.

Independent School District #52 Board Policies

250.14 Performance Responsibilities continued

19. Acts as liaison among the school, other school systems, and the community, interpreting activities and policies of the school and encouraging community participation in school life.
20. Coordinates special conferences between parents and teachers.
21. Recommends to the Board the removal of a teacher or other employee whose work is unsatisfactory, according to established procedures.
22. Conducts meetings of faculty and staff as necessary for the proper functioning of the school.
23. Provides for adequate inventories of property under his or her jurisdiction and for the security of and accountability for that property.
24. Assumes responsibility for his or her own professional growth and development through membership and participation in the affairs of professional organizations, through attendance at regional, state, and national meetings, through enrollment in advanced courses, and the like.
25. Attends the monthly meetings of the Board of Trustees and submits a monthly report on the progress of the school.
26. Advises the Board of the need for new and/or revised policies. Presents to the Board recommended Board policy revisions as directed by the Board for their review. Develops such administrative rules and procedures as necessary to implement Board policies.
27. Encourages communication among teachers, support staff and the Board.
28. Select all textbooks, reference and library books and submit such selections to the Board for their approval.
29. Be responsible for coordination of all after hour use of the school or school property.
30. Serves as an ex-official member of the committees and councils within the school.
31. Performs such other duties as may from time to time be assigned by the board.
32. Prepares and submits to the Board recommendations relative to all matters requiring Board action, placing before the Board such necessary and helpful facts, information, and reports as are needed to insure the making of informed decisions.
33. Submits to the Board a clear and detailed explanation of any proposed procedure which would involve either departure from established policy or the expenditure of substantial sums.
34. Makes recommendations to the Board concerning the transportation of pupils in accordance with the law and the requirements of safety.